

APPENDIX A

THE DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION OF DATA COLLECTION FOR THE PROCESS ANALYSIS

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Five data collection activities were undertaken to meet the objectives of the process analysis:

1. A telephone survey of outreach and admissions (OA) counselors nationwide
2. In-depth site visits to a sample of 23 Job Corps centers
3. Interviews with managers of OA and placement agencies that serve these 23 centers
4. A mail survey of all Job Corps centers
5. Collecting data from automated Job Corps administrative records on student characteristics and program experiences

This appendix discusses in detail the design and implementation of the process analysis data collection effort. In the following sections, each data collection activity is discussed in turn.

A. TELEPHONE SURVEY OF OA COUNSELORS

A telephone survey of OA counselors was conducted to address several process analysis objectives. First, the data were used to provide a comprehensive understanding of the outreach and admissions practices followed by OA counselors in recruiting and screening students for Job Corps. Second, it documented how recent changes in Job Corps policy affected the recruitment and screening process and identified any effects of random selection on the OA process. Finally, it provided data that will be used to develop variables for the subgroup impact analysis to assess whether OA practices affect the likelihood that eligible applicants enroll in, and stay in, Job Corps. Below we describe the survey content, the selection of the sample of OA counselors to interview, survey implementation, and the weights used in the analysis of the telephone survey data.

1. Content of OA Counselor Telephone Survey

To meet the multiple data objectives described above, the telephone survey of OA counselors was designed to collect information on several topic areas. In developing specific questions, we used

closed-ended answer categories whenever possible to ensure the comparability of data among respondents. The major topic areas in the OA survey included counselor experience in Job Corps and scope of recruitment activity (goals and centers for which they recruit); outreach activities conducted; admissions counseling activities and the application process; the counselor's role in making center assignments and any contact with students after arrival; the effects of random selection on counselor activities and referral services to control group members; and general background characteristics of the counselor.

2. Selection of OA Counselors

The sample frame for the OA telephone survey is comprised of all OA agency offices nationwide that were operating during the period of intake for the impact evaluation. In November 1995, we identified all of the distinct OA offices that were responsible for recruiting any of the program or control group members included in the National Job Corps Study.¹ Distinct OA offices were identified based on the OA office identification code on the ETA-652 program application forms sent to MPR as part of the random assignment process. For the most part, this was a straightforward process, as a given office identification code generally corresponded to a single office location. In a few cases, however, the OA contractor used a single identification code to represent multiple office locations. In such situations, we obtained the addresses of all of the individual offices from the OA contractor. This process resulted in identifying 556 distinct OA offices in the contiguous 48 states, representing over 900 OA counselors.

¹Due to the scheduling requirements of the OA counselor survey, we included all OA offices that recruited a sample member who went through the random selection process prior to October 1, 1995. Because about 80 percent of the over 14,000 youths who were ultimately included in the research sample had gone through the random selection process by this time, the sample frame should cover virtually all OA offices. However, it is possible that the sample frame of OA offices could omit some very small offices that only recruited a few Job Corps applicants.

We then grouped all research sample members--program research and control group members--into strata defined by each of the 556 identified OA offices to which they applied. For youths who applied to Job Corps through an office that shared its identification code with other offices, we assumed that sample members in the strata applied to the closest OA office. We then randomly selected one sample member from each of these OA agency office strata. For each randomly selected research sample member, we included in the survey sample the OA counselor who recruited that youth.²

3. Implementation of the OA Counselor Telephone Survey

The telephone interviews of OA counselors were conducted between December 1995 and March 1996. If the sampled counselor was no longer employed, or the OA contractor had changed, we asked the supervisor/manager for the name of the person(s) who was responsible for the sampled counselor's geographical area and interviewed that person or persons.

In administering the survey, we also discovered two types of problems with the underlying sample frame. First, we found that in some instances the same OA counselor was sampled multiple times under different office identification codes, as some counselors are assigned to more than one office/area. In these cases, we only repeated the questions concerning the specific recruitment area, and did not repeat all of the other questions about their normal OA activities. Second, as indicated above, there were duplicate office identification codes because some OA contractors have multiple

²For the OA identification codes used for multiple office locations, we first randomly selected three research sample members from each of the distinct office addresses to ensure there would be a high probability that at least one of the selected youths actually applied to that office location. We then randomly ordered the three youths, determined whether the screeners who recruited the youths had office addresses that corresponded to the correct office location, and included the first screener with the correct address in the sample frame for the OA survey.

offices, but their counselors use a single office code. As a result of these problems, we had to be particularly careful in linking counselors' responses to specific OA offices.

We ultimately completed telephone surveys with 463 OA counselors, which accounted for 536 of the 556 sampled office identification codes. There were 6 refusals and 14 OA counselor positions were vacant. Thus, of the 556 sampled office identification codes, we obtained completed interviews that represent the OA counselor activities and practices for 96.4 percent of all office codes. This high response rate is important for ensuring that the descriptive findings from the survey can be interpreted as accurately reflecting overall OA counselor practices at the time of the National Job Corps Study. Moreover, this high response rate indicates that it will be possible to link the characteristics and activities of OA counselors to the research sample members they served for the subgroup impact analysis with minor sample loss due to OA counselor nonresponse.

4. Sample Weights for the Analysis of OA Counselor Survey Data

The findings using the OA counselor telephone survey data presented in Chapter III of this report were constructed using weighted data in order to represent the experiences of a typical Job Corps applicant with an OA counselor. Thus, in the construction of summary measures, larger weights were given to OA counselors in OA offices that served more research sample members than to OA counselors in OA offices that served fewer research sample members. In addition, we assumed that OA counselor practices are similar for all counselors within the same office.

We assigned a weight to a counselor to be equal to the number of program research and control group members who were recruited by the OA office associated with that counselor.^{3,4} To represent

³If the sampled counselor was associated with more than one OA office, the weight for that counselor is the sum of the number of youths recruited by each office. In some instances, the sampled counselor who left his or her position was replaced by more than one counselor. In this case, each new counselor associated with the office was allocated an equal share of the total number of
(continued...)

nonrespondent OA offices, we increased the weights proportionately for those respondent offices employed by the same contractor.

B. CENTER VISITS

Another major data collection activity for the process analysis involved in-depth site visits to a sample of 23 Job Corps centers. These visits allowed us to collect comprehensive data from program staff and students about the effectiveness of various aspects of the program. These subjective opinions were used to enrich our understanding of Job Corps program operations and to generate hypotheses about factors likely to affect program impacts.

This three-part section describes the design of the site visits. In the first section, we describe the content of the interview guides and focus group protocols. In the second section, we discuss the methodology used to select the sites. Finally, we discuss the implementation of the site visits.

1. Interview Guides and Focus Group Protocols for Site Visits

To collect the type and quantity of information required to fully meet the objectives of the in-depth site visits to Job Corps centers, the design called for a series of interviews and focus group meetings, along with observations of several different activities. This data collection effort allowed us to learn about center practices, goals, and culture.

The major site visit activities were as follows:

- ***Interviews with the Center Director.*** These interviews collected information on center history, staff recruitment, training, and communications, center capacity utilization,

³(...continued)
youths recruited by that office.

⁴In the instances where there was a contractor change, the counselor(s) associated with the new OA office inherited research sample members recruited by the counselor(s) affiliated with the corresponding old OA office.

center external relations, the performance management system, and factors influencing student length of stay.

- ***Interviews with Academic Teachers and Vocational Instructors.*** Discussions were held about course offerings, educational facilities, staffing, organization, and student orientation, assessment, testing, program assignment, and advancement.
- ***Interviews with Residential Living Staff.*** These interviews collected information on the RA role in dormitory life, student counseling, methods that are used to help new students adjust to center life, the behavior management system, SSTs, and P/PEPs.
- ***Interviews with Counselors.*** Counselors were asked questions about counseling services provided on center, how they are assigned students, methods they use to identify at-risk students and deal with student problems, the behavioral management system, and the P/PEP process.
- ***Interviews with Center Security Staff.*** Topics included center discipline, rules, safety and security.
- ***Interviews with Health Staff.*** Data were collected on the health care staff, the health service orientation program, and the provision of health care both on and off center.
- ***Interviews with Recreation Staff.*** Topics included the extent of the recreation program offerings on and off center, and how the recreation program is used to enhance Job Corps values and encourage positive student behavior.
- ***Focus Group Meetings with Students at Different Stages of the Program.*** Two types of student focus groups were convened to obtain information from a variety of different perspectives. One focus group included about eight current students selected by program staff who had been on center from one to two months. The second focus group included about eight students who had been on center for at least five months. The first student focus group was designed to discuss issues that affect the enrollment decision, experiences with OA counselors, program expectations, initial experiences and selecting a trade. The second meeting focused on overall program experiences and expectations regarding completing their trade and plans after leaving the center.
- ***Focus Group Meetings with Center Staff.*** Focus group meetings were held with approximately eight center staff involved in different aspects of center operations. These open-ended meetings obtained staff views and opinions about the effectiveness of various program components that supplement the data gathered from the more standardized interviews with center staff.
- ***Observations of Center Activities.*** These observations included arrival of new students, orientation sessions, academic classes, vocational classes, social skills training sessions, P/PEPs, student government meetings, center review boards, and center staff meetings

- *Conducting Value of Output Studies and Administering Cost Data Protocols for the Benefit-Cost Analysis.*⁵

We developed a total of 30 interview/monitoring guides for conducting these site visit data collection activities.⁶ Each interview guide was designed to include numerous open-ended questions to obtain information on significant aspects of center operations in each major topic area. In addition, we included many questions that cut across topical areas to focus on those aspects of center operations that tend to determine the “philosophy, atmosphere, and culture” of the center. For example, within each module we explore numerous issues, including:

- The relationships between center staff and students
- The degree to which center staff have a common vision of the “goals” of the program
- The quality of the center’s facilities and equipment
- The involvement of all center staff in center administration and the disciplinary system
- The extent to which students are involved in decision making and center operations
- The degree to which operations are integrated into a single service delivery program at the center
- The relationships of the center to the regional office and the National Office
- The integration of center operations with outreach and screening activities, placement services, and the broader community

⁵For additional information on the design and implementation of the data collection plan for this component of the site visit, see McConnell (1998).

⁶The interview guides for the center site visits were pilot tested in late 1994 and early 1995 in two centers. Revisions to the interview guides were made based on the results of the pilot test and submitted to DOL and OMB for review and approval.

2. Selection of Centers for Site Visits

The sample design for the center site visits called for randomly selecting 23 centers from among all centers in the contiguous 48 states that were included in the impact study. As a result, we excluded from consideration centers in Alaska, Hawaii and Puerto Rico, as well as Indypendence and Pivot Job Corps Centers.⁷ We also excluded New Orleans JCC and Shreveport JCC because of major construction activity that was ongoing during the site visit data collection period.

To select the sample of centers for the site visits, we used a stratified systematic random sampling approach. This approach was implemented in three stages. In the first stage, centers were stratified into the following three categories on the basis of the type of center contractor and the extent to which the center served nonresidential students:

1. Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) centers
2. Job Corps centers operated by private contractors that are predominantly residential centers
3. Job Corps centers operated by private contractors that serve a significant number of nonresidential students

The percentage of a center's capacity that was nonresidential was used to classify each privately operated center as predominantly residential or as serving a significant number of nonresidential students. A center was classified as serving a significant number of nonresidential students if its nonresidential capacity comprised more than 20 percent of its total capacity.⁸

⁷Indypendence and Pivot Job Corps centers were excluded from the evaluation because the eligibility criteria for entrance into these special programs differ from the regular Job Corps eligibility requirements, and because the services provided by these programs differ substantially from those provided by the regular Job Corps program.

⁸One attractive feature of this criterion is that centers classified as significantly nonresidential comprise approximately 20 percent of the total student capacity of all Job Corps centers, and Job Corps is authorized to serve approximately 20 percent of its students in a nonresidential capacity.

In the second stage, we selected the number of site visits to conduct within a stratum to be proportional to the share of student capacity in the stratum to the total Job Corps student capacity across all strata. This approach ensured that this stratified sample characterized the centers that a “typical” Job Corps participant attended. This resulted in allocating site visits to 5 CCCs, 13 privately operated, predominantly residential centers, and 5 privately operated, significantly nonresidential centers. This allocation of the 23 site visits overrepresented CCC centers, slightly overrepresented significantly nonresidential centers and underrepresented primarily residential private centers relative to the proportion of students served in such centers nationwide. Given the study objectives related to understanding CCCs versus contract centers and of the nonresidential component, however, it was important that the site visit sample include a sufficient number of CCCs and significantly nonresidential centers.

In the third stage, we selected the sample of centers for site visits within each stratum. To ensure variation in center characteristics, a systematic random sampling procedure was used to select the specific centers within each stratum. Among CCCs, centers were first ordered according to the federal operating agency.⁹ For the two types of centers operated by private contractors, centers were first ordered by region. Within each primary ordering, centers were ordered on the basis of the ranking of the center as determined by the Job Corps performance measurement system during program year (PY) 1994 to ensure the centers visited represented a wide range of measured performance. Within each ordering, centers were then selected randomly with a probability proportional to the size of the center, as measured by student capacity. The center selection process was conducted in July 1995 for site visits to be conducted throughout 1996.

⁹CCCs are operated by four agencies within the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the Department of the Interior.

Table A.1 presents the 23 centers that were selected using this systematic random sampling technique.¹⁰ Following the geographic location information provided in the first four columns of this exhibit, we show the center type, the actual performance measurement system (PMS) ranking of the center at that time, and the calendar quarter in which we planned to conduct the site visit.¹¹ The center type column indicates whether the center is a CCC, a privately operated primarily residential (PR) center, or a privately operated significantly nonresidential (SNR) center. The ranking of the centers selected range from a high of 5 to a low of 93, with most of the higher-ranking centers located in the western region, which is consistent with the historical geographical distribution of performance of all Job Corps centers.

3. Implementation of Site Visits

Site visits were conducted by a large number of staff at Battelle, DIR, and MPR. To ensure that procedures were implemented consistently across centers, all site visit staff on the project team participated in a two-day training that covered site visit preparation activities as well as the conduct of the site visits.

¹⁰We examined Student Pay and Allowance Management Information System (SPAMIS) data for the 23 centers and found that they were generally quite representative of all centers nationwide. The only small differences identified were that (1) the selected centers offered slightly more training in construction trades than the typical center, and (2) the sample included relatively more centers operated by a particular specific private contractor. Overall, however, the set of sites met our objective of being broadly representative of the Job Corps program as it operated at the time of the National Job Corps Study.

¹¹The design for the benefit-cost analysis required that random samples of work projects be assessed during the site visits. In addition, we wanted to spread our visits evenly throughout the year to examine how center operations differ by season. Consequently, we randomly assigned each site visit to a calendar quarter with equal probability (that is, 25 percent each).

TABLE A.1

JOB CORPS CENTERS SELECTED FOR SITE VISITS

Center Name	City	State	Region	Center Type	PMS Rank	Planned Visit
Westover	Chicopee	MA	1	PR	60	96Q3
Edison	Edison	NJ	2	PR	89	96Q1
Iroquois	Medina	NY	2	CCC	83	96Q2
Charleston	Charleston	WV	3	PR	73	96Q4
Keystone	Drums	PA	3	PR	49	96Q3
Pittsburgh	Pittsburgh	PA	3	SNR	35	96Q2
Earle Clements	Morganfield	KY	4	PR	86	96Q2
Kittrell	Kittrell	NC	4	PR	72	96Q1
Lyndon B. Johnson	Franklin	NC	4	CCC	69	96Q3
Miami	Miami	FL	4	SNR	93	96Q3
Mississippi	Crystal Springs	MS	4	PR	93	96Q4
Blackwell	Laona	WI	5	CCC	58	96Q3
Dayton	Dayton	OH	5	PR	78	96Q2
Albuquerque	Albuquerque	NM	6	SNR	39	96Q4
Gary	San Marcos	TX	6	PR	55	96Q2
Tulsa	Tulsa	OK	6	PR	53	96Q4
Flint Hills	Manhattan	KS	7	PR	42	96Q2
Clearfield	Clearfield	UT	8	PR	47	96Q4
Weber Basin	Ogden	UT	8	CCC	8	96Q3
San Jose	San Jose	CA	9	SNR	5	96Q1
Phoenix	Phoenix	AZ	9	SNR	24	96Q1
Curlew	Wauconda	WA	10	CCC	13	96Q1
Tongue Point	Astoria	OR	10	PR	14	96Q3

The complexity of the site visit data collection effort required extensive preparation and planning before the site visits. Prior to conducting each site visit, site visitors obtained extensive background materials for the visit and worked with center staff to develop a schedule of interviews with staff to administer the interview guidelines outlined above. The background materials were collected to enable staff to make the best use of the limited amount of time available at each center. The background materials included information on key center personnel, center characteristics gathered from Job Corps administrative records (for example, student characteristics, on board strength, VST plans), and the center mail survey (if completed before the visit). In addition, we designed 17 tables to obtain pre-site visit information on numerous center activities needed for the benefit-cost analysis.

The site visits were conducted by teams of two staff members and lasted from three to five days as planned, depending on the size and structure of the center. Because of the wide range of structured and unstructured data collection and observational activities, the site visit team was generally on center throughout the day and during some evenings as well. Although site visit staff used the interview guides to focus the discussion, they were also encouraged to explore any relevant topics that arose during an interview.

Overall, the site visits were conducted as planned, with all of the site visits except two being completed during 1996 in the planned calendar quarter.¹² This was accomplished with the help and cooperation of numerous program staff, and the collection of activities provided the research team with a comprehensive perspective of all Job Corps operations. Although we made every effort to schedule the visits so that we minimized inconvenience to the center, in some cases our visits

¹²The visit to the Albuquerque JCC was delayed until January 1997 to accommodate a change in contractors, and we rescheduled the visit to the Charleston JCC to January 1997 to accommodate a planned center relocation. However, because the move to the new center was also delayed, we ultimately conducted the center visit in January 1997 at the old location.

coincided with events or activities that were not the typical activities of an ongoing center, but that provided insights into special circumstances. For example, a couple of visits occurred soon after a new contractor took over the center, one visit occurred while a low-performing center was changing its teacher contract and in a major staffing transition, and one visit to a large center occurred while it was in the middle of operation “fast track” to fill the center and was receiving 250 new students with each input. Each of these special circumstances affected the staff and student attitudes about the Job Corps program, as well as the detail and focus of the data that could be obtained during the visit. Moreover, some of the centers visited were in the middle of a procurement process, which required that site visitors carefully explain the purpose of our visits to alleviate staff concerns that the information we obtained might be used as input to their bid to continue as center operator. Although such situations added to the stress and strain of operating a center and affected the site visit data collection effort somewhat, they also enabled us to obtain valuable insights into activities surrounding center transitions.

C. INTERVIEWS WITH MANAGERS OF LINKED OA AND PLACEMENT AGENCIES

To acquire a full picture of the 23 centers selected for the site visits, we conducted telephone interviews with an OA office manager and a placement office manager that served each of these selected centers. We chose to interview the managers in these offices because they were most likely to be familiar both with staff practices at the operational level and with agencywide policies and initiatives.

Below, we provide additional details about the content of these surveys, the selection of the sample of managers to interview, and our experiences in conducting the interviews with the office managers of the selected agencies.

1. Content of Linked OA&P Office Manager Surveys

The interview for the OA office manager focused on similar issues to the OA counselor interview described earlier, although more detailed information was collected during the OA manager interview. In addition, the interview included questions on agencywide issues of which individual counselors might not be aware. For example, the OA manager interview collected data on budgets for advertising and other items, and on the organization and staffing of OA offices.

The discussions with the manager of the placement agency focused primarily on the extent to which the contractor coordinated activities with the linked center, the type of linkages with various employers, the types and timing of services provided to students after their departure from the center, the types of procedures used to follow up with youths who do not appear at the placement agency, the characteristics of students that impact placement activities, and the processes used to verify reported placements. We were interested also in any impacts that the placement performance standards had on center or placement contractor operations. Because the center placement standards were changed to include all students rather than only relatively long-term stayers, it was important to collect data on how these standards affected center and placement contractor operations.

2. Selection of Linked OA&P Contractors

The OA office manager to be interviewed for the linked center was randomly selected with probability proportional to the number of students who attended the center that were recruited and screened by the OA office. Thus, the manager was selected to provide information on the OA experiences of a typical student served by the center. The selection process was conducted in the following three-stages: (1) we arrayed all PY 1994 enrollees who attended each of the 23 centers to be visited, (2) we randomly selected one enrollee at each center, and (3) we conducted the OA office manager interview with the manager of the office that recruited the selected student to Job Corps.

This resulted in a representative sample of OA agencies that served the centers selected for the site visits.

A similar process was followed for selecting the linked placement contractor office manager, except that it was applied to students who *terminated* from Job Corps during PY 1994. For each of the 23 centers, we generated a list of all terminees from the center in PY 1994 and recorded the initial six-digit placement agency code assigned for each terminnee in SPAMIS. In developing this list, we excluded students who were assigned a placement agency outside of the center's region. From this list we randomly selected one terminnee from each center, retrieved the placement agency ID code, and interviewed the office manager of the placement agency that was assigned to provide placement services to that terminnee. The resulting sample is equivalent to a simple random sample of placement agencies with probability proportional to size as measured by number of terminees assigned to each agency.

3. Implementation of Linked OA&P Manager Surveys

Table A.2 displays the 23 centers selected for site visits, along with the linked OA contractor and placement contractor selected to be interviewed for the OA manager survey and the placement manager survey, respectively. As shown in the exhibit, one OA contractor (North Carolina Human Resources) was selected for two of the centers (Kittrell JCC and Lyndon B. Johnson JCC) and two of the placement contractors were selected twice (Virginia Job Corps Placement Services, for both Keystone JCC and Charleston JCC; and Ohio DESI for both Dayton JCC and Blackwell JCC). In these instances, we conducted a single telephone interview with the appropriate manager, and included the specific questions for both linked centers in the single interview. It should also be noticed that three contractors (Region 4 Del-Jen, Pennsylvania DESI and Washington Del-Jen) were selected as an OA contractor for one center visit and as a placement contractor for a different center

TABLE A.2

OA&P CONTRACTORS LINKED TO
23 CENTERS SELECTED FOR SITE VISITS

Region	Center	OA Contractor	Placement Contractor
1	Westover	Penobscot JCC	Westover JCC
2	Edison	Edison JCC	Edison JCC
2	Iroquois	South Bronx JCC	Satellite Services
3	Charleston	West Virginia DESI	Virginia JC Placement
3	Keystone	Pennsylvania DESI	Virginia JC Placement
3	Pittsburgh	Virginia DESI	Pennsylvania DESI
4	Earle C. Clements	Clements JCC	South Carolina ES
4	Kittrell	North Carolina Human Resources	Kittrell JCC
4	Lyndon B. Johnson	North Carolina Human Resources	Region 4 DEL-JEN
4	Miami	Region 4 DEL-JEN	Miami JCC
4	Mississippi	Mississippi ES	Mississippi ES
5	Blackwell	Illinois DEL-JEN	Ohio DESI
5	Dayton	Ohio DESI	Ohio DESI
6	Albuquerque	New Mexico Teledyne	New Mexico Teledyne
6	Gary	Texas Employment Commission (ES)	Texas Employment Commission (ES)
6	Tulsa	Arkansas ES	Louisiana ES
7	Flint Hills	Flint Hills JCC	Missouri ES
8	Clearfield	Nebraska DESI	Colorado DEL-JEN
8	Weber Basin	Wyoming DEL-JEN	Utah DESI
9	San Jose	California WICS	San Jose JCC
9	Phoenix	Phoenix JCC	Inland Empire JCC
10	Curlew	Washington DEL-JEN	Oregon MTC
10	Tongue Point	Idaho DEL-JEN	Washington DEL-JEN

visit. In such cases, we conducted the manager interviews as usual, but mentioned that they would be contacted later to ask about their OA or placement experiences with the other linked center. The interviews with the OA&P managers were conducted by telephone, and usually within a month after the site visit to the center.

The major problem we faced in implementing the OA and placement manager interviews was contractor change, particularly for placement agencies. Six of the 23 placement contractors selected changed from the time they were selected to the time of the interview.¹³ These changes in contractors resulted in two additional duplicate placement agencies (Satellite Services and Kittrell JCC), thus reducing the number of distinct placement agencies from 23 to 19. In addition, one OA contractor changed, as ITT replaced Penobscot JCC as the OA contractor for Westover JCC. Thus, the number of distinct OA agencies for the survey was 22.

We conducted interviews with all 22 OA managers selected for the survey whose agency provided OA services to students who attended one of the 23 Job Corps centers visited. We also completed interviews with 18 of the 19 managers of distinct placement agencies. The manager for the Missouri ES placement contract refused to participate in the survey, consistent with their agency's general protest of the overall study. Both the OA and the placement manager interviews were quite lengthy and detailed, typically requiring from 1.5 to 2.0 hours to complete.

D. MAIL SURVEY OF JOB CORPS CENTERS

A mail survey of all Job Corps centers supplemented the more detailed qualitative information obtained from the center site visits with summary information about all centers. The data collected

¹³Westover JCC was replaced by the Grafton office of ITT, Edison JCC was replaced by the Edison office of ITT, South Carolina ES and Mississippi ES were both replaced by Satellite Services (Atlanta), Region 4 DEL-JEN was replaced by Kittrell JCC, and Louisiana ES was replaced by New Orleans JCC.

through this survey provides comparable measures of key center characteristics that will be used in the subgroup and component impact analyses. Below, we describe the content of the mail survey and the implementation of the survey.

1. Content of the Mail Survey

The mail survey of all Job Corps centers provided a unique opportunity to collect nationwide information about the characteristics of centers and to identify the extent of variation in key characteristics across centers. The general topic areas for the mail survey of Job Corps contractors overlapped greatly with the topic areas for the site-visit interview guides for Job Corps centers described above. However, the range of issues that could be reliably covered in a self-administered mail survey is more limited, because the data elements must be sufficiently quantifiable and unambiguous to be obtained without direct interaction between the respondent and an interviewer and because the overall length of the survey instrument must be reasonable to avoid excessive respondent burden.

The center mail survey obtained detailed information that will be needed to support key component and subgroup impact issues. As a result, in addition to obtaining a broad picture of center operations, the mail survey was designed to collect as much detail as possible on the characteristics of centers that are likely to affect whether a student arrives on center, length of stay, student vocational choices, and vocational completion. The major topic areas in the mail survey include: center contractor and related OA&P contracts; relationship and experiences with OA contractors that serve center; pre-arrival contacts with students and the center orientation program; student class schedules; OEP and practices related to selecting/changing vocational training programs; academic program; center residential living; and the role/impacts of the Job Corps

Performance Measurement System (PMS), now known as the Outcome Measurement System (OMS).

2. Implementation of the Mail Survey

The mail survey was distributed to Job Corps center directors during the last quarter of 1995, which was when a large percentage of program group members were enrolled in Job Corps. The survey was sent to center directors of all 110 Job Corps centers--including centers in Alaska, Hawaii, and Puerto Rico that were not included in the site visits--so that we would be able to describe the entire Job Corps program with the mail survey data.¹⁴

The majority of centers returned the surveys within approximately three months. Center directors who did not return the mail survey on a timely basis were contacted and encouraged to complete the survey. This schedule resulted in obtaining the mail survey data before most site visits, which provided valuable background data for the site visit team. Using these normal follow-up methods, we were able to obtain completed surveys from 108 of the 110 centers, for an initial response rate of 98.2 percent. Moreover, with the assistance of the Job Corps National Office, we ultimately received the mail surveys from the other two centers. Thus, the final response rate for the mail survey was 100 percent. The quality of the data is reasonably high and there was relatively little item nonresponse.

It is important to note that the analysis of the center mail survey data focuses on the Job Corps program as a whole and presents information on the characteristics of a “typical center.” This is because the results are based on data for the entire population of centers, and thus, center characteristics are measured with no sampling error. Thus, there are no statistical inferences to be drawn from these data. As such, we do not perform statistical tests of differences between the

¹⁴A draft mail survey was sent to two center directors to be pilot tested.

characteristics of centers, since any differences are in fact actual differences in the population of centers.

E. JOB CORPS ADMINISTRATIVE RECORDS

As indicated in Chapter II, to provide a picture of the characteristics of students as they enter Job Corps and of any major differences in student background characteristics across key program components, data were obtained from SPAMIS for 69,118 students who terminated from Job Corps during calendar year 1996. This corresponds to the time period of the center site visits, as well as the time when most students who enrolled in the National Job Corps Study and who entered Job Corps were leaving the program. As such, these data should provide an accurate picture of the types of students served in Job Corps at the time the National Job Corps Study was conducted.

The SPAMIS data included in the process analysis include student background characteristics such as age, race, sex, education level (for example, highest grade completed, whether have GED/high school diploma at entry), academic ability (based on program test scores), and participation in vocational training programs. These data will be combined with information about the centers the youths attended--region, CCC or contract center, primarily residential or significantly nonresidential center--to provide a detailed picture of the types of youth who enroll in different centers and regions, and the vocational programs to which they are assigned. Other SPAMIS data for youth included in the treatment group, including information about services received, whether they complete their vocational training, and participation in advanced programs and overall program length of stay, will be obtained as part of the data collection for the process analysis for use in the component and subgroup impact analysis.